

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5068

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY

CINCPAC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 0456

CINCPAC FOR POLAD PASS TO ASST. SECRETARY HABIB AND  
AMBASSADOR SNEIDER

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KS, US

SUBJECT: ARMY SECRETARY HOFFMAN CALLS ON PRESIDENT PARK

BEGIN SUMMARY: DURING ARMY SECRETARY HOFFMAN'S CALL ON  
PRESIDENT PARK, LATTER CITED DANGERS INHERENT IN NORTH  
KOREAN DESIRE TO EXPLOIT VULNERABILITIES IN ROK DOMESTIC  
SCENT AND/OR US-ROK RELATIONSHIP. HE SAID FAULTY NORTH  
KOREAN PERCEPTIONS OF THESE SITUATIONS COULD LEAD TO  
MISCALCULATIONS AND REQUIRED MAINTENANCE OF STRONG  
US POSITION OF SUPPORT FOR ROK AND MEASURES TO MAINTAIN  
DOMESTIC CALM IN SOUTH. PRESIDENT ALSO ASKED FOR USG  
SUPPORT FOR FORCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (FIP) AND DESCRIBED  
ANNOUNCEMENT OF OIL DISCOVERY NEAR POHANG AS PREMATURE  
BUT NECESSARY TO QUIET SPECULATION. SECRETARY PROVIDED  
APPROPRIATE ASSURANCES ON US POLICY TOWARD ROK AND,  
EXPRESSING AWARENESS OF PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL CONCERN,  
ASSURED HIM THAT GENERAL HOLLINGSWORTH'S SUCCESSOR  
WOULD POSSESS ALL NECESSARY QUALIFICATIONS FOR THIS  
IMPORTANT COMMAND. END SUMMARY

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1. SECRETARY OF THE ARMY MARTIN R. HOFFMAN, ACCOMPANIED

BY CHARGE AND CINCUNC, CALLED ON PRESIDENT PARK JAN19.  
DISCUSSION, LASTING SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTES, DEALT WITH  
FOLLOWING:

A. NORTH KOREAN PERCEPTION OF US SUPPORT FOR ROK:  
PRESIDENT SAID NORTH KOREA IS IN DIFFICULTY ON TWO COUNTS:  
ITS ECONOMY IS UNDERGOING PAINFUL STRAINS AND THERE IS  
DOMESTIC POWER STRUGGLE IN ANTICIPATION OF SUCCESSION  
PROBLEM WHEN KIM IL SUNG DIES. THESE CONDITIONS MAKE  
IT MORE LIKELY THAT NORTH KOREANS WILL CAREFULLY  
OBSERVE AMERICAN DOMESTIC DEBATE DURING PERIOD LEADING  
TO ELECTIONS. THEY WILL ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT DIVISIONS  
IN AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION ON SUBJECT OF US COMMITMENT  
TO ROK, AND MIGHT EVEN BE TEMPTED TO LAUNCH SOME  
RECKLESS ADVENTURE. IN RESPONSE TO SECRETARY'S  
REASSURANCES REGARDING FIRMNESS OF US POLICY AND LIKELI-  
HOOD OF POSITIVE OUTCOME OF US PUBLIC DEBATE ON  
SECURITY ISSUES DURING ELECTION PERIOD, PRESIDENT SAID HE  
GRATEFUL FOR STRONG ASSURANCES TO ROK WHICH PRESIDENT  
FORD AND OTHER SENIOR AMERICANS HAVE PROVIDED. PROBLEM  
IS THAT NORTH KOREAN PERCEPTION OF SITUATION IN ROK  
AND AMERICAN PUBLIC ATTITUDES IS CLOUDED BY THEIR  
OWN PECULIAR PREJUDICES. THIS COULD RESULT IN SERIOUS  
MISCALCULATIONS, EITHER OF STRENGTH OF SUPPORT FOR  
STATEMENTS MADE BY AMERICAN OPPONENTS OF COMMITMENT TO  
ROK OR OF DEPTH OF SOCIAL UNREST BEHIND ANY DISTURB-  
ANCES IN SOUTH, SUCH AS RENEWAL OF STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS  
IN THE SPRING. BOTH US AND ROK MUST THEREFORE ENSURE  
THAT NORTH KOREANS HAVE NO BASIS FOR SUCH MISCALCULATIONS.  
SECRETARY REMARKED THAT HE COULD NOT ASSURE PRESIDENT  
THAT THERE WOULD BE NO GESTURES OR STATEMENTS BY AMERICAN  
OPPONENTS OF US SUPPORT FOR ROK OF KIND CITED BY  
PRESIDENT, BUT THAT POSITION OF EXECUTIVE BRANCH IS  
CLEAR. HE DOUBTED WHETHER THERE WOULD BE CHANGE IN  
THAT POSITION EVEN IN EVENT OF CHANGE IN ADMINISTRATION  
AS RESULT OF FORTHCOMING US ELECTIONS.

B. REPLACEMENT FOR GENERAL HOLLINGSWORTH:  
SECRETARY HOFFMAN SAID HE AWARE OF PRESIDENT'S CONCERN  
ABOUT EFFECT OF GENERAL HOLLINGSWORTH'S DEPARTURE FROM  
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KOREA. FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SCHLESINGER HAD  
MENTIONED PRESIDENT'S CONCERN TO HIM FOLLOWING HIS  
RETURN TO WASHINGTON AFTER SCM MEETING LAST SEPTEMBER.  
HE ASSURED PRESIDENT THAT SECRETARY RUMSFELD AND OTHER  
SENIOR AMERICAN OFFICIALS WERE WELL AWARE OF IMPORTANCE  
WHICH PRESIDENT PLACES ON HOLLINGSWORTH'S COMMAND AND  
THAT HIS SUCCESSOR WOULD BE CAREFULLY CHOSEN. HE  
WOULD POSSESS ALL ATTRIBUTES OF LEADERSHIP NECESSARY

FOR DISCHARGE OF THIS MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY. PRESIDENT APPRECIATED SECRETARY'S EXPLANATION AND PLEASED THAT HOLLINGSWORTH'S SUCCESSOR WOULD BE TOP FLIGHT AMERICAN SOLDIER.

C. FORCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN: IN DESCRIBING FIP TO SECRETARY, PRESIDENT EXPRESSED HOPE THAT MOD PLAN WOULD BE COMPLETED WITHIN SEVERAL YEARS BUT ADDED THAT ROK WOULD STILL NEED TO UP-GRADE ITS CAPACITY TO POINT WHERE IT COULD COPE WITH NORTH KOREAN ATTACK ON "ONE TO ONE LEVEL." NEW DEFENSE TAX WOULD ENABLE ROK TO MOBILIZE REQUIRED INTERNAL RESOURCES BUT CONSIDERABLE ASSISTANCE WOULD BE NECESSARY TO MEET FOREIGN EXCHANGE REQUIREMENTS OF FIP. HE ASKED SECRETARY TO ASSIST IN PERSUADING USG TO MAKE FMS CREDITS AVAILABLE FOR THIS PURPOSE. SECRETARY ASSURED PRESIDENT THAT HE WOULD SUPPORT FIP PERSONALLY AND, WITH REFERENCE TO NEED FOR CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL, THOUGHT IT SHOULD NOT BE DIFFICULT TO MAKE GOOD CASE FOR FMS CREDITS IN LIGHT OF PRUDENT MANNER IN WHICH ROKG HAD HISTORICALLY MAINTAINED BALANCE BETWEEN PROMOTION OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NECESSITY TO PROVIDE FOR DEFENSE.

D. OIL DISCOVERY: WHEN SECRETARY CONGRATULATED PRESIDENT ON RECENTLY ANNOUNCED OIL DISCOVERY NEAR POHANG, PRESIDENT CAME ALIVE AND PROMPTLY SENT FOR OIL SAMPLE, WHICH ARRIVED IN GLASS CONTAINER ON A LACQUER TRAY. PRESIDENT REMARKED THAT HE HAD REALLY INTENDED TO KEEP DISCOVERY A SECRET, BUT TOO MANY PEOPLE HAD BECOME EXCITED AND HE HAD BEEN FORCED PREMATURELY TO MAKE ANNOUNCEMENT OF DISCOVERY TO HOLD SPECULATION IN CHECK. IT WOULD NOT BE KNOWN UNTIL JUNE AT LEAST WHETHER DEPOSIT WAS REALLY VALUABLE. HE BRIEFLY DESCRIBED DIFFICULTIES OF DRILLING IN POHANG AREA, CITING FACT THAT OIL HAD BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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FOUND AT DEPTH OF 1475 METERS.

E. NORTH KOREAN INTENTIONS: IN RESPONSE TO SECRETARY'S QUESTION, PRESIDENT AGREED THAT ROK WAS ECONOMICALLY WELL AHEAD OF NORTH KOREA AND THAT TWO WERE ROUGHLY COMPARABLE IN MILITARY POWER. HE SAID ROKG HAS EVIDENCE THAT KIM IL SUNG IS IN POOR HEALTH. KIM HAS BEEN CAREFULLY CULTIVATING GROUND FOR DESIGNATING HIS SON AS HIS SUCCESSOR AND, GIVEN PAST EMPHASIS ON CULT OF PERSONALITY, THIS EFFORT MUST BE CREATING SERIOUS INTERNAL STRAINS. IT WELL KNOWN, PRESIDENT CONTINUED, THAT KIM IL SUNG'S GREATEST DREAM MUST BE TO SEE US FORCES WITHDRAW FROM ROK, A DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO STRIKE DECISIVELY AGAINST THE ROK. TWO FACTORS NOW PREVENT OUTBREAK OF WAR: PRESENCE OF US FORCES BACKED BY US PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICAL STABILITY IN ROK. EITHER SOCIAL

TURMOIL IN THE SOUTH OR A WITHDRAWAL OF US FORCES COULD  
INVITE NORTH KOREAN ATTACK. NORTH KOREANS ARE ANXIOUS TO EXPLOIT  
ANY SIGN OF WEAKNESS OR VULNERABILITY. NORTH KOREANS MIGHT  
ASSUME US WOULD REACT ON VIET NAM MODEL IF US PUBLIC  
OPINION REFLECTED DISENCHANTMENT WITH COMMITMENT TO  
ROK. SITUATION THEREFORE REQUIRES INTERNAL CALM AND,  
AS SYMBOL OF US SUPPORT, MAINTENANCE OF US FORCES  
IN KOREA, PRESIDENT SAID THERE SHOULD BE NO CHANGE IN  
STATUS OF US FORCES FOR FOUR OR FIVE YEARS SINCE IT WOULD  
TAKE AT LEAST THAT LONG FOR ROK TO DEVELOP CAPABILITY TO  
TACKLE NORTH KOREA ALONE.  
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## Message Attributes

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